

I tore off his clothes. He wasn't going to need them after this anyway. Suit I lifted away and hung on the chair, except for his spine, which discreetly climbed up my ass. Like I said, Suit is never very far away.

And then I fucked Yp's brains out.
And then I strangled him to death.

Afterwards I took a nap, and when I woke up Suit made me a big meal and sent out a signal to Desani and Sons requesting a rescue drop to the station.

They said they'd be about 38 hours. I set up in Spanic's room – the one without a rotting corpse in it – and watched videos. After a while I began to dream, in the Godball sense, that is. I didn't mind. I was pretty sure I would handle it better than the scientists had.

Yes, the Godball was alive in my body. Had entered via Yp's emission, during orgasm. Just as I'd hoped – and feared, of course. Deceiving Suit wasn't a simple thing for me. And housing the Godball probably wouldn't be simple either. But the Godball was hungry for life, and he hadn't missed his chance. That was the idea, right? To preserve the essence of the Godball, to keep the dream alive. If I could accomplish that, the men didn't really matter. Suit deserved his killing.

He'd been tricked, of course. He thought I only wanted to fuck. Typical of Suit's one-track mind: sex and death, sex and death... but there wasn't anything he could do about it. Suit could no more kill me than I could shed him. We needed each other. And if he got to take on the Assassin, why couldn't I carry the Godball? It was only fair.

I figured that with my capabilities I was a much better host for the Godball, anyway. My survival gradient was much higher. I was his ticket off the station, his ticket to the stars. Plus I had the Assassin right here with me, in Suit, where I could keep an eye on it.

It was going to be very interesting, living with the three of them.

Just before the dropship landed Suit gave me some news: something else was alive in my body. A little bit of Yp had met up with a little bit of me. I was hatching a baby. And yes, the Godball was in the little bit of something that would become the baby, too.

Hands off! I warned Suit.

Suit agreed. Then he asked if it would be okay if he knit it some swaddling clothes.

Jonathan Lethem wrote "The Speckless Cathedral" (*Interzone* 57). His first novel has now been accepted for publication and will appear in the USA from Harcourt, Brace in the Spring of 1994. He lives in Berkeley, California.

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before. On Earth we live our lives right at the heart of an intelligence that is so all-pervading we're totally unaware of it. It's only during the Push, when for an instant we're in interstellar space, that the ambience momentarily diminishes. That difference is enough to wither us, creatures of the bright light that we are. Try and imagine what a complete absence of that sustenance would be like, and not just for an instant but for eternity.

"I think for the beings who implanted the Glyphics we're just background illumination. They've strung the stars with sources of intelligence, like lights on a Christmas tree, or maybe campfires to ward off the cold. But fires can't be allowed to burn too hot, they can't be allowed to get out of control. The Bugs realized that at the end. They were smarter than us and that's probably why they died. Maybe it's not the limiter that kills you but the awareness of it."

Mikey had lapsed into a silence from which he would never emerge. I didn't know that at the time so I shrugged and continued. "Whatever happens we won't be allowed to develop further. Perhaps if we can learn to accept it we might survive."

I didn't believe it, then or now. The Glyphics make us strive, make us chafe against the chains. Intelligence is a matter of struggling to push back the limits.

The belittling awareness of ultimate limitation, reached now and not at some faraway endpoint in humankind's glorious future, will eat its way into our collective psyche. It'd killed the Builders in five of their generations, the Bugs in barely two of theirs.

I'm not sure we'll take that route. I don't think we'll just lie down and die, but at the same time we're not great when it comes to acceptance. Far from it. We rebel against everything sooner or later.

In the future I see great genocidal armadas setting sail across the gulfs of space to extinguish some of the other bright "lights" in a vain attempt to signal our defiance to the gods.

Of course it won't do any good. After all, would you tolerate any defiance from a light bulb?

Fergus Bannon lives in Glasgow. He is employed as a scientist in the health service, which puts him up there with the panda on the Endangered Species list. Before settling down to a career of blood and gore he served with the merchant marine and visited many of the world's tastier trouble spots such as Chile, Panama and South Africa. Nowadays he gets his thrills by having his stories reviewed by the Glasgow SF Writers Circle, a process he likens to coming to terms with a major illness (anger, denial, despair, then acceptance). He would like to take this opportunity to thank them for three years of well-reasoned abuse. (Yes, the man previously best known for his story "The Unusual Genitals Party" [see review by Neil Jones and Neil McIntosh in IZ 52] wrote most of this author's note himself – Ed.)

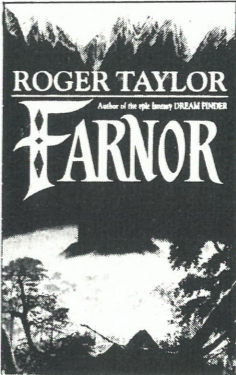
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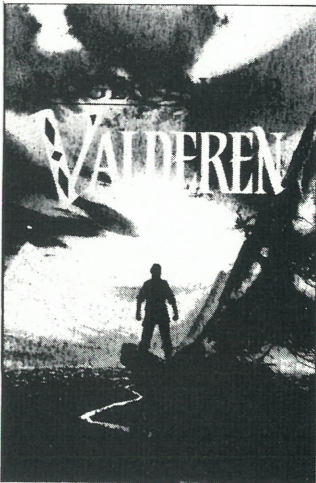
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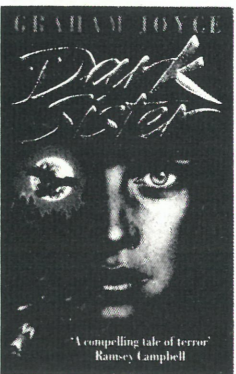


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